



Speaking Effectively With the Media About *Recovery Month*

As you promote your **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** activities using the methods outlined in the “Media Outreach” section of this planning toolkit, you hopefully will generate opportunities to speak about your mission to local media through interviews. Reporters regularly conduct interviews to compile background information when developing their stories. This provides an excellent opportunity to share your viewpoint with the media, and ultimately the general public.

Below are some tips to help you become an extraordinary spokesperson for your organization, as well as some key points to convey to reporters when discussing **Recovery Month**.

Tips to Remember...

- **Keep it simple** – Identify the three or four key points you want to get across and stick to them. Cluttering your interview with numerous messages can be confusing, and your most important ideas will get buried.
- **Get right to the point** – Reporters generally do not have the time (or patience) to sift through lengthy statements. Present the most important points briefly and quickly, and then ask the reporter if he or she would like you to elaborate on them.
- **Remember your audience** – Your interviewer, like the general public, may not spend as much time thinking about substance use disorders as you do. Avoid using acronyms and jargon unfamiliar to those outside the field. Also be prepared to explain basic facts about substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery.
- **Check for accuracy** – Everything you tell the reporter should be supported by factual evidence. The reporter may request documents that back up your interview.
- **Make yourself invaluable** – Offer to provide additional sources and experts, and help the reporter arrange to speak with them after your interview. If you are unable to answer a reporter's question, offer to research it or provide him or her with a source who can answer thoroughly.
- **Practice** – By rehearsing, you are better able to state your key points clearly during the interview. You also may find it useful to anticipate common media questions about your issue and prepare the appropriate responses in advance.
- **Adhere to anonymity traditions, if applicable** – People willing to come forward about their experiences in recovery can speak with the media without violating the “anonymity” clause of traditional mutual support groups. Many of these groups permit sharing stories as long as membership in the group is not mentioned.

Key Points to Convey to Media During *Recovery Month*

You may want to tailor the following points to use as a template for your media interviews:

1. [Your organization's name] is holding [event] on [date/time] at [location] to [encourage others to seek treatment for substance use disorders/educate community members about the stigma and discrimination associated with treatment and recovery/discuss the need for people with substance use disorders to receive the same treatment as those with any other medical condition] so that more of [city's] residents will seek treatment and recovery options.
2. [Your organization's name]'s activities correspond with the 17th annual observance of ***National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)*** in September, a nationwide celebration of recovery from substance use disorders. ***Recovery Month*** is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This year's theme is ***"Join the Voices for Recovery: Build a Stronger, Healthier Community."***
3. Locally, more than [number] of [city]'s residents experience substance use disorders, yet only an estimated [number] receive treatment. Stigma and discrimination are barriers that discourage individuals who suffer from substance use disorders to seek help. [For localized information, contact your state's Single-State Agency listed in the "Resources" section of this planning toolkit. Inquire about both public and private patient census information. State and local information is also available from SAMHSA's 2004 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* at www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm.]
4. Recovery programs, such as [programs in your community], provide a broad range of treatment services and offer various care options. Frequently, people need family counseling, job training, or help paying for services. These programs can help connect people with needed services.

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month 2006* with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov. By sharing creative executions and activities, you are helping to generate momentum, thereby furthering effective outreach that will touch the lives of millions of people.

To share your outreach efforts and community success stories during *Recovery Month*, please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form in this planning toolkit. Instructions are included on the form.

Please send samples of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional materials to: Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1 Choke Cherry Road, 2nd Floor, Rockville, MD 20857.

Sample *Recovery Month* materials are available electronically on the CD-ROM in this planning toolkit. For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit the *Recovery Month* Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov or call 1-800-662-HELP. For additional information about substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery, please visit SAMHSA's Web site at www.samhsa.gov.